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# Hallucinogens: Just the Facts

## What are hallucinogens?

Hallucinogens or psychedelics are mind-altering drugs which affect the mind's perceptions, causing bizarre, unpredictable behavior and severe, sensory disturbances that may place users at risk of serious injuries or death. The combination of hallucinogens with other substances, like alcohol or marijuana, can increase the chances of adverse effects and risk of overdose as well.

## What are the different types of hallucinogens?

LSD or acid is one of the most common, well-known hallucinogens. Psilocin or Psilocybin mushrooms, Mescaline, Morning Glory seeds, Jimson weed, and DMT are less common psychedelics with effects similar to LSD. PCP and Ketamine are dissociative anesthetics with hallucinogenic properties. Ecstasy is a hallucinogenic stimulant related to methamphetamine and Mescaline.

## Why do people use hallucinogens?

Individuals may use hallucinogens for the mind-altering effects, the visions, and feelings of well-being. They may also seek the approval of their peers, stress reduction, or rebellion against authority. Some may use hallucinogens to achieve so-called states of heightened mental awareness.

## What is LSD?

LSD (lysergic acid diethylamid) is a potent hallucinogen derived from lysergic acid. Lysergic acid can be found on ergot, a fungus that grows on rye and other grains. Commonly referred to as "acid," a "hit" or dose can be found as tablets, capsules, clear liquid, thin squares of gelatin, or colorful paper dipped in LSD that is licked. Although colorless and odorless, LSD has a slight bitter taste. "Blotter acid," which is absorbent paper soaked in LSD and sold as squares, can be obtained for \$4 to \$5 for a "high" or "trip" that lasts three to 12 hours. Other slang terms for LSD include Microdot, White Lightning, Blue Heaven, Windowpane, and Sugar Cubes. LSD is a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance with severe penalties for possession and use.

## What is PCP?

Phencyclidine (PCP) is a dissociative anesthetic with hallucinogenic properties. The drug was previously used as an anesthetic in humans in the 1950s but discontinued because patients became agitated and disoriented after its use. The drug was also used as an animal tranquilizer but discontinued in 1979. Illegal supplies on the street are manufactured in clandestine labs where supplies are of dubious quality and may contain impurities. Among drug users,



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PCP can be found as a pure white, crystal-like powder, tablet, capsule, or bitter-tasting, clear liquid that is consumed orally, injected, sniffed, or smoked. PCP is often combined with marijuana and tobacco products. A study in Houston reported the use of “fry,” marijuana and tobacco products dipped in PCP-laced embalming fluid and smoked. Some slang terms for PCP include Angel Dust, Crystal, Jet Fuel, and Cyclone. In Texas, PCP is a Schedule I Controlled Substance with severe penalties for possession and use.

### What is Special K or Ketamine?

Ketamine (ketamine hydrochloride) is closely related to PCP and was also used in the past as a surgical anesthetic. Because it produced serious side effects, the drug was withdrawn for human use. Currently, Ketamine is used in veterinary medicine, and most supplies are diverted from legitimate sources. On the club scene, Ketamine can be found in liquid form or as a white powder that is snorted or smoked with marijuana or tobacco products. A combination of Ketamine and cocaine is called “CK.” Other slang terms are Special K, Vitamin K, New Ecstasy, Psychedelic Heroin, Ketalar, Ketaject, and Super-K. Users experience profound hallucinations and visual distortions similar to the effects of PCP. They call these effects “K-Land.” A larger dose can produce a more frightening experience called a “K-hole” or an “out-of-body, near-death experience.” They may also experience a loss of senses, sense of time, and identity which can last anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours. Ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, high blood pressure, depression, recurrent flashbacks, and potentially fatal respiratory problems. See *Club Drugs: Just the Facts* for more information on Ketamine.

### What is Ecstasy?

Ecstasy or MDMA (methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is a stimulant that combines the properties of methamphetamine or “speed” with mind-altering or hallucinogenic properties related to the hallucinogen, mescaline. Designer drugs are illicit variations of other drugs. Because of many different recipes used to manufacture Ecstasy, deaths have been caused by some other substances inadvertently created during production, such as PMA (paramethamphetamine). Known on the street as Adam, X-TC, Clarity, Essence, Stacy, Lover’s Speed, Eve, etc., Ecstasy is most often found in tablet, capsule, or powder form and is usually consumed orally, although it can also be injected. Ecstasy is sometimes packaged in capsules or generic tablets to imitate prescription drugs with the average dose costing anywhere from \$7 to \$30 per pill. Ecstasy is illegal, and is classified as a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance. For more information about Ecstasy, see *Ecstasy: Just the Facts*.

### What are psilocybin mushrooms?

Certain types of mushrooms contain hallucinogenic chemicals, psilocybin and psilocin. These mushrooms have a strong bitter taste and can be eaten or brewed into a tea for effects lasting six hours. Once ingested, mushrooms cause nausea and other physical symptoms before the desired hallucinogenic effects appear. Mushroom hunters run the danger of selecting poisonous mushrooms



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which can cause death or permanent liver damage within hours of ingestion. Some dealers sell edible mushrooms found at the grocery store laced with LSD or PCP as “magic mushrooms.” Psilocybin or Psilocin mushrooms are Schedule 1 Controlled Substances with severe penalties for possession and use.

### Are there other hallucinogens?

Yes. Mescaline, Morning Glory seeds, Jimson weed, and DMT are hallucinogens that are less common. Mescaline is a hallucinogen that comes from the Peyote cactus. Mescaline is usually smoked or swallowed in pill form. Morning Glory seeds are occasionally brewed into a tea or eaten for the hallucinogenic effects. There have been some reports of teens drinking “gordo juice,” a combination of Morning Glory seeds and fruit juice to counteract the bitter taste of the seeds. The seeds can cause convulsions, gangrene, and adverse psychological effects. Jimson weed (Angel’s Trumpet) is a wild, poisonous weed that produces hallucinations and has caused deaths in Texas. DMT is another psychedelic drug that acts like LSD.

### What are hallucinogens’ physical effects?

The effects of hallucinogens are widely unpredictable depending on the potency, dose, the user’s mood, surroundings, and personality. The first effects may be felt within 30-90 minutes, and last 12 hours depending on the type and amount of drug taken. Individuals under the influence may have dilated pupils, increased heart rate and blood pressure, incoherent speech, sweating, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, dry mouth, and tremors. Users that combine drugs or overdose can go into convulsions, coma, or experience heart and lung failure. They may even die.

### What are hallucinogen’ emotional effects?

Hallucinogens have a profound effect on the mind by altering sensations and emotions. Users may feel several different emotions at once or experience dramatic mood swings. These drugs can cause sensory disturbances, such as delusions and hallucinations. They may also allow users to “hear” colors and “see” sounds. Users may even experience flashbacks up to a year thereafter, where they feel the drug’s effects without taking more of the drug.

### What is a “bad trip?”

A bad trip indicates a bad psychological reaction to psychedelic drug, and it is relatively common. Users may experience panic, confusion, paranoia, anxiety, feelings of helplessness, loss of control, depression, and frightening out-of-body experiences. Occasionally, these feelings and emotions can cause unpredictable, violent or suicidal behavior leading to serious injury or death. Users under the influence may exhibit strange behaviors consistent with a schizophrenic psychosis or catatonic syndrome, whereby they become lethargic, mute, and make meaningless, repetitive movements. PCP and Ketamine, in particular, can cause a decreased awareness of touch and pain that can result in



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self-inflicted injuries. The use of hallucinogens can also unmask mental or emotional problems, like depression or schizophrenia.

### What are the long-term effects?

Research has shown changes in the mental functions of some chronic LSD users, but it is not known whether those changes are permanent or if they will disappear after use is stopped. Some users develop signs of brain damage affecting memory, attention span, mental confusion, and difficulty thinking. Chronic PCP users report memory and speech difficulties, as well as hearing sounds and voices that do not exist. PCP-induced mental disturbances may be temporary or may last for days or weeks. Researchers have found that Ecstasy may cause long-term brain damage because it is toxic to neurons.

### Is it possible to become addicted?

Although most hallucinogens do not normally cause addiction, they do build tolerance quickly, requiring larger amounts of the drug to get “high.” The risks of adverse reactions and overdose increase as users take larger amounts of the drug to get high. PCP or Ketamine, on the other hand, may cause dependence, an intense craving for more of the drug.

### How long do hallucinogens remain in the body?

LSD has a half-life of four hours, and most of the drug is eliminated rather quickly. PCP, on the other hand, can be detected in the urine from 1-7 days for a single use, much longer for chronic use. Ecstasy can be detected up to four days in the urine.

### Are adolescents at-risk?

Adolescents are particularly at risk of adverse reactions from hallucinogen use as they enter puberty, a time of rapid physical and emotional changes. Hallucinogens are particularly dangerous because the effects are so unpredictable. They can cause violent behavior in some and suicidal tendencies in others. As memory, perception, and judgment are clouded under the influence, users are at risk of severe injuries, overdose, and death from drowning, burns, falls, and car accidents. Sometimes, hallucinogen use can uncover severe mental disorders, such as schizophrenia or severe depression.

### What can parents and communities do?

Before reaching adolescence, youth need to receive the support, guidance, and opportunities to develop healthy bonds with parents, schools, and communities. Parents can help by becoming informed and talking to their teenagers about about drug use. Participation in in extracurricular activities, the expression of parental disapproval of using drugs, and parental attendance at school events are associated with less drug experimentation. Communities can help by decreasing the availability of drugs, promoting drug-free homes and environments, and by supporting drug use prevention programs.



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## Who should I contact if someone close to me has a problem with hallucinogens?

Contact the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse's toll-free hotline at (800) 832-9623 or your local Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse for referral assistance. You may also contact your family physician, hospital, or yellow pages for other intervention and treatment options.

## For more information, contact the following sources:

- Your region's TCADA Prevention Resource Center. Dial toll-free (888) PRC-TEXX to be connected to the center nearest you.
- Your local Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.
- Other sources can be found at your local public library and in the yellow and blue pages of your phone book under "Drug Abuse."

Access reliable information instantly from the Internet from the following sites:

- The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information's home page has information on hallucinogens and other substances of abuse. <<http://www.health.org>>
- The National Institute on Drug Abuse has national statistics and the latest research findings available. <<http://www.nida.nih.gov>>
- The Partnership for a Drug-Free America has a drug database to help parents identify specific drugs, their effects, and drug paraphernalia. <<http://www.drugfreeamerica.org>>



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